



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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ONE SAN DIEGAN DIES BY SUICIDE EVERY DAY *County Launches Suicide Prevention Campaign*

Words can save a life.

A new County suicide prevention campaign aims to get people talking about their mental wellbeing, in hopes of saving the lives of those who are contemplating suicide. The television, radio and print ads seek to educate people about the warning signs of suicide and how to help someone who is thinking about ending his or her life.

"We hope this campaign will help people recognize the warning signs of suicide and encourage them to get help for themselves or a loved one," said Chairman Bill Horn, County Board of Supervisors. "The County's suicide prevention campaign is one of the first to be launched in the state."

Suicide claims the life of about one San Diegan every day. Last year, 372 suicides were reported in the region. Those cases represented 293 white victims, 42 Hispanic victims, 22 Asian victims, 10 victims who were black and 5 victims of another race. Additionally, nearly 80 percent were men.

Mental health experts believe that for every suicide, six other people who were close to the victim suffer lasting emotional trauma.

"Suicide affects not only the individual. The devastating impact reaches far beyond those who take their own lives. An important component of the County's Live Well, San Diego! Strategy is to focus on the entire health of a person, including their mental health, and the safety of everyone around them," said Nick Macchione, Director of the County's Health and Human Services Agency. "Suicides can be prevented. Know what the warning signs are and be ready to assist a suicidal person in need of help."

The suicide prevention campaign is the second phase of *It's Up to Us*, an education and awareness campaign launched 10 months ago to reduce the stigma of mental illness and to encourage people to get help.

While the suicide prevention campaign will target the general population, some messages are specifically directed at middle-age men, who are dying by suicide in higher numbers than people in other age groups. Advocacy groups request the phrase "commit suicide" be eliminated because it supports the notion that suicide is akin to committing a crime. They prefer the term "dying by suicide."

A new website ; www.ToughTimesSD.org offers information, resources and help to men who might be going through some very difficult times in their lives.

Risk factors of suicide include talking of hurting or killing oneself, divorce, separation, family stress, loss of health, job or home, increasing alcohol or drug use, and isolation from family and friends.

"When people feel hopeless, helpless, and desperate, they might feel no sense of future, no way to make it better," said Jeff Rowe, Supervising Psychiatrist for the County Mental Health Services. "When a friend or a loved one comes to you for help, take it seriously. Ask if he or she is having thoughts of suicide or ending it all. That simple conversation can make the difference between life and death."

People in suicidal danger should call 911. Help is also available by calling the County's Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339 or visiting www.Up2SD.org. ###